

INDOT Mowing and Vegetation Management Policy Takes Root

INDOT has adopted a vegetation policy that restructures and clarifies when, where, and how often department maintenance crews mow roadway right-of-way – and how roadway vegetation is managed.

The vegetation management plan is designed to uniformly maintain right-of-way along all interstate, U.S. highways and state roads throughout Indiana. The plan enables INDOT to maintain highway vegetation in an environmentally sensitive manner consistent with the special conditions presented by local climate, topography, vegetation and level of urbanization.

“Improved vegetation management will reduce employee man-hours, enhance safety, and free maintenance crews to perform more critical activities while benefiting the environment,” said INDOT Roadside Services Coordinator William Fielding.

With more than 40,000 acres to maintain, INDOT is charged with balancing safety, costs and aesthetics when managing roadside vegetation.

The purpose of vegetation management is to:

- Enhance the safety of the motoring public
- Enhance environmental protection
- Mitigate erosion while providing adequate drainage
- Promote and preserve native wildlife habitats and native flora throughout the state

INDOT’s mowing practices are focused on maintaining vegetation at a safe height for driver visibility. Between mowing cycles, INDOT performs spot mowing to promote sight visibility at intersections or drainage. If grass or other vegetation is blocking intersection sight visibility, citizens are encouraged to report the area to the appropriate district.

It costs INDOT approximately \$8 million each year to mow limited-access, divided and rural state highways. Herbicide application costs approximately \$45 per acre. Improved vegetation management



INDOT’s vegetation policy clarifies how often highway right-of-way is mowed while balancing safety, cost and aesthetics.



INDOT’s mowing practices are focused on maintaining driver visibility.



will reduce the need for future herbicide application, which will benefit the environment and reduce costs.

INDOT also utilizes its [Hoosier Roadside Heritage Program](#) to plant wildflower and native plants/grasses to landscape Indiana's roadsides. This practice aids roadside beautification and enables INDOT to more effectively battle invasive and noxious vegetation.

INDOT's vegetation management practices consist of balancing the following elements for maximum efficiency:

- **Herbicide Treatments:** INDOT's goal is to eradicate invasive species and noxious weeds. By using a more stringent and uniform herbicide application process, INDOT will improve roadside appearance and reduce costs.
- **Vegetation Management:** When crews are clearing brush and trees from along the roadways, they will treat the ground and stumps to prevent re-growth.
- **Equipment:** Crews will raise the mowing deck to allow plant roots to develop, controlling erosion and shading out weed seeds from germinating.
- **Timing:** Crews will closely monitor the growth of the vegetation and time mowing cycles based on geographic location and weather. Research has shown that altering spring mowing schedules will prevent the grass from springing back up and limit growth for the rest of the season.
- **Mowing Area:** INDOT mows its limited-access, divided and rural state highways with a combination of full- and partial-width mowing focused on four mowing zones.

More information about INDOT's [vegetation management policy](#) is available on our website.